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Is it Finally Time to Change? Ready! Fire! Aim!...Oops!

Proverbs 21:5: (NASB) *The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.*



Time for a Christian Questions Pop Quiz! Who here in our listening audience is so satisfied with their Christian life that they see no need to focus on further change or development? As you look at your life and imagine yourself before Jesus, would he say to you, wow your character is so fully developed, your prayer life is so complete and your sacrifice of your will is so overwhelmingly perfected that you can stop trying? Just relax for you are the perfect example of my disciple! No? Well, then what are you doing about it? Are you resolving to change, but more importantly, are you keeping your resolve?

Babylonian history, *The History of New Year's Resolutions, geobeats*

- *New Years Resolutions: one of those ideas that seemed to have existed forever but it did have a beginning a long time ago. The New Year's holiday was first celebrated approximately 4,000 years ago in Babylon. However, the Babylonians did not have an official written calendar so they observed the holiday in March during the early beginnings of spring. During this time the Babylonians would make promises to their gods, usually entailing paying their debts. Shedding a few pounds didn't seem to be on top of their minds.*

Part 1: READY! READY = Listen/Look and Think

This part of the process is the least glamorous of the three steps and is also probably the most overlooked as well. "Ready" represents the prep work before the event. It is akin to all of the practice that a professional must put in before an event. No one cares about those hours, the technique, the discipline and the focus all done ahead of time. Observers only care about the performance. They only see the result. The athlete knows differently.

*"I didn't lose my will to win; I lost my will to prepare."
--Joe Montana upon retiring from the NFL*

Habakkuk 2:2-4:

1. Have a clearly defined goal - *Write the vision*
2. Write it out in great detail - *make it plain on tablets*
3. Review it daily - *so that a runner may read it*
4. Take action - *do those things necessary to make progress - For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie*
5. Realize that failures are only stepping-stones - *If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay*
6. Never, never, never give up. - *The righteous live by their faith*

Do we really have to think about change - can't we just do it?

Roman history, *The History of New Year's Resolutions, geobeats*

- *Then in Roman times as different emperors took the throne, the calendar began to change. In 153 BC the Roman senate ruled that the New Year would officially begin on January first. The Romans would make vows to their god, Janus, after whom the month of January was named. They would commonly ask for forgiveness and exchange gifts. In 46 BC Julius Caesar altered the months yet again, and he made the year last for 445 days. It was during the reign of Caesar that resolutions became more recognized with people making promises such as showing kindness to others. Still no sign of Weight Watchers.*

More on our being READY: Isaiah 30:20-21: In our Christian preparation, we can access the will of God. We can see His will and hear it IF we are attune to it!

Matthew 13:9-13: The looking and listening elements are a key **beginning place** for true readiness. Look for and listen for what changes ought to be made according to God's will and plan. Getting ready takes a lot of effort.

"A calloused palm and dirty fingernails precede a green thumb." --Michael Garofalo

 **Too high goals, Ask the Expert, New Year's Resolution, Dr. Lisa Wilson, citypsychology.com**

- *We start by setting too high expectations. We set unrealistic goals in time frames that are unachievable. What then starts to happen is we start to become self-critical as we falter. So, as we become less successful in our attempts, we start to beat ourselves up. We might find ourselves saying things like: "Who am I kidding? Why can I do this? I can never do this." So, we begin to believe those thoughts and as we begin to believe those thoughts, we begin to believe that it is not possible. That's when we start to give up those things we set out in the first place. So, setting too high expectations and unrealistic goals actually end up being self-defeating.*

To be **READY** we must **think**. Looking and listening are one level of engagement but having to *think* about it is another. Thinking takes an effort that most people just won't make. Proverbs 23:7 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: Here is where the true engagement *really* begins. To take thoughts captive is to reset our perspective **ON PURPOSE!** Accepting Jesus as our Savior is the starting point...now the real work starts! Our profession in life is to change ourselves to become more and more Christ-like.

 **Reflective learner, Ask the Expert, New Year's Resolutions, Dr. Mike Evans, citypsychology.com**

- *It is difficult to say what it is precisely about New Years, but I think a lot of what we do is about culture. I think New Years creates a pocket to stop and think, to be mindful, to reflect. You go public with a change and to support others that are changing as well. This ability to reflect is the key educational skill I want my students and residents to have - to be what we call a "reflective learner;" to see our personal strength and weaknesses, to have clarity about priorities, to balance optimism with realism, to have flexibility. We all have the capacity for this type of learning but our busyness and I think our habits often get in the way.*

Once we take our thoughts captive, we must keep them captive: Philippians 4:8

So, to be **READY** is to **LOOK, LISTEN** and **THINK** - all based on the perspective of God's will in us. It is God's will and not mine, so let me change step-by-step.

Part 2. AIM! (The act of committing oneself)

This part of the process is the gathering up of the previous preparation work and focusing it on a forward direction. When you aim, what do you do? Let's use the example of taking a foul shot in basketball. To aim is to focus on the target, shut out distractions, relax for the sake of your best shot, and become committed to this action above all others.

James 1:8 Matthew 6:24 Simple statements, yet so thoroughly overlooked by so many! We are only to be about the work of God through Christ in self-sacrifice. We sometimes think we can have the best of this world and the best of Christianity. Who are we really trying to be?

"A man who chases two rabbits catches none." --A Roman proverb

 **Small goals - timeframe - emotions, New Year's Resolution, Dr. Lisa Wilson, citypsychology.com**

- *Make sure that you set specific, small goals on the way to this bigger goal that you want to achieve. Make sure that you set some timeframes on those things because otherwise they're going to be really difficult to be able know whether or not you actually succeeded. The other thing that's going to be really important is to think about your emotions. How are you going to cope with your emotions during this time when you are trying to change something? Quite often the things that we try to change are the things that we previously used to cope with emotions. So whether that be food or whether that be exercise, whatever that might be, we are suddenly going to*



try and change some of these things. So what are you going to do when some of these emotions come up for you? Find some alternative ways of coping.

Shut out distractions - often easier said than done! Galatians 5:13-17: Relax and exhale for the sake of your best shot...**To relax is to have confidence in your direction!** Joshua 24:14-15

Become committed to this action above all others: Philippians 3:13-14 Once committed, we can prepare to **FIRE!**

 **Self-critical thoughts are spam, *New Year's Resolutions*, Dr. Lisa Wilson, citypsychology.com**

- The other thing that you want to do is think of ways of tackling some of those self-critical thoughts. Self-critical thoughts will come up. Expect them. When they do come up perhaps imagine that they are junk email, the junk email that comes through. And rather than reading every email and treating every thought as if it was a fact, file it away. Carry on with what you were doing.*

Satan will present thoughts to us that will try to distract us from our goals.

Commitment stands on a unique footing in our lives: First the offering and then the transformation: Romans 12:1-2: We have to be transformed from what we were to what God would have us to be. We are to be a willing living sacrifice. True transformation requires planning and foresight. This is not just lip service, but instead it is life service.

 **Smaller popcorn bucket, *New Year's Resolutions*, Dr. Mike Evans, citypsychology.com**

- I see success linked with small goals and small wins. I see more facilitation than motivation, more self-monitoring than self-control. Willpower isn't static; it kind of comes and goes and instead of fighting off one urge after another, these people set up their lives to minimize temptations. Science tells us if you have a bigger bucket of popcorn you'll eat it. Good changers know this and they play offense not defense. They schedule weekly activities or games, throw out the ashtray, they put out their running shoes. They use their high willpower moments to prepare for their low willpower moments. They cut fruits and veggies and put them at the front of the fridge. They call and make an appointment with the trainer.*

To **AIM** - to commit oneself also requires broad and clear perspective of what we are committed to. To **AIM** is to decide to base our life in humility, grasp what we are to do and what we are to support, and to decide to love without reservation: Romans 12:3-15

How much we miss when we rush through the process and decide NOT to **AIM!** If we do not do our part, then we are limiting God's part. If we want to change to become a better Christian without doing the work - *present your bodies a living sacrifice* - God can't transform us. He will not step over our will to get to us. He will work *through* our will to get to us. If we don't bend our will towards Him, we are not giving Him an open door.

Part 3. FIRE! For the Christian, this is not just a quick shot at some target; rather it is to be a lifetime event. This represents the carrying out of what we have looked for, listened for and thought out, and brought to the forefront through commitment. This is the ACTION part of the equation and the actions needed to build a life of true change are manifest in a variety of ways, such as: **Following - Leading - Speaking Out - Thankfulness - Giving - Receiving**

Prepare yourself and **FIRE** into a life of following. Following is a hard task. A great example of this is Simon Peter, who needed a three-step process over several months to actually follow Jesus.

Simon's first encounter with Jesus: Perhaps the **READY** stage? **This account takes place shortly after Jesus came back from his 40 days of fasting and praying:** John 1:40-42: Jesus' message to Simon: I know who you are and who you can become. Jesus did not yet invite Simon to follow him, he simply piqued his curiosity.

 **When you want to give up, *New Year's Resolutions*, Dr. Lisa Wilson, citypsychology.com**

- Before you give up, think about why this was important to you in the first place. Write it down. Will it still be important to you in ten, twenty, or thirty years' time? Is it really still important in this moment? When you made this resolution what was*

the underlying reason for it? If you decided that what you wanted to do was lose weight, why did you want to lose weight? Was it because you wanted to be healthier? Was it because you wanted to have more energy? Make sure that you are really clear. This helps you to identify what your values are and this will help you to keep going with your resolution a long way.

Simon's second recorded interchange with Jesus: Perhaps the **AIM** stage? **This account is estimated at six months to a year after Jesus' baptism.** Matthew 4:18-22: Jesus' message to Simon: I know you; now follow me for true satisfaction. Simon followed but then went back to his fishing business. Good thing Jesus is patient!

What makes us actually FIRE? What makes us actually live the commitment?

 **Tools of change, Doctor Mike Evans, New Year's Resolutions**

- *When I think of successful changers I actually don't think of the CEO laying out a large agenda or goals. I think more of the plumber or carpenter. These people come prepared with tools. They know they need to reframe and adapt older structures but they also know they can build what needs to be built. Better habits. One room at a time. "January" was named by the Romans to honor Janus, the god of beginnings and transitions. He faces both the future and the past, and I think that is what is special about New Years - learning from the past but pointing to a new you saying, "That's where I want to go."*

Simon's third recorded interchange with Jesus: Perhaps the **FIRE!** stage? **Jesus' teaching using Peter's boat as his platform:** Luke 5:4-11: Jesus' message to Simon: I know you; I know you are willing to follow. Now as you follow me your own sin seems overwhelming and unconquerable, but I say to you as you follow me and trust in me, you can now do it without fear, for with my strength you will become fearless fishers of men. Simon Peter was now ready to **FIRE!**

 **Medieval- grapes- doors, The History of New Year's Resolutions, geobeats**

- *In Medieval times knights reaffirmed their commitment to chivalry as a yearly tradition. To this day the traditions of New Year's resolutions and getting rid of past year's bad luck continues. Various countries have differing approaches. At the stroke of midnight in Wales a back door is open and then shut to release the luck of the past year. Spain residents eat twelve grapes at midnight to bring good luck in the coming months. What's your New Year's resolution?*

Prepare yourself and FIRE! into a life of righteousness: 2 Timothy 2:15-19: Focus on godliness first. The greatest source of godliness is in the word of God.

 **Think of this as a journey, New Year's Resolution, Dr. Lisa Wilson, citypsychology.com**

- *Start to think about this as a journey. Quite often when we set ourselves up for New Year's resolutions we're looking to get to the end point. Well, when we're going on a journey, the journey is part of the whole experience. Consider this: you can either spend this journey checking your watch, finding how long it's going to take you to get there or you can enjoy the experience and really notice things along the way. See your pitfalls, see your hurdles as just part of the journey and part of the experience of getting there.*

Prepare yourself and FIRE! into a life of giving: 1 Peter 4:7-8 Galatians 6:8-10:

We have great opportunity for great change in our lives! Realize what is important to change. *Change is a process:* **READY** yourself, **AIM** yourself and then **FIRE!** yourself at Christ-likeness!

***So, is it finally time to change?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!***